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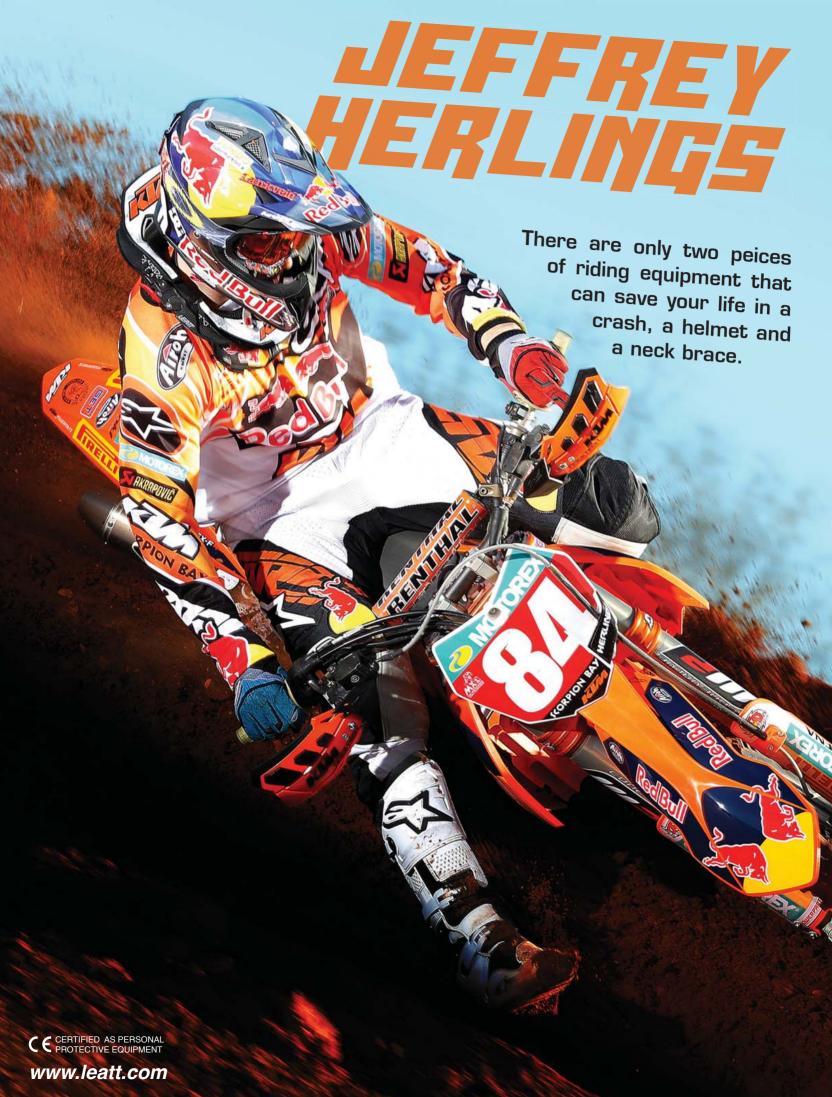












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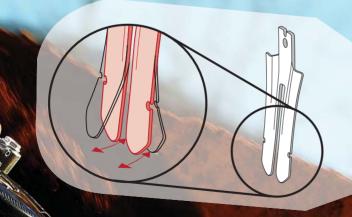












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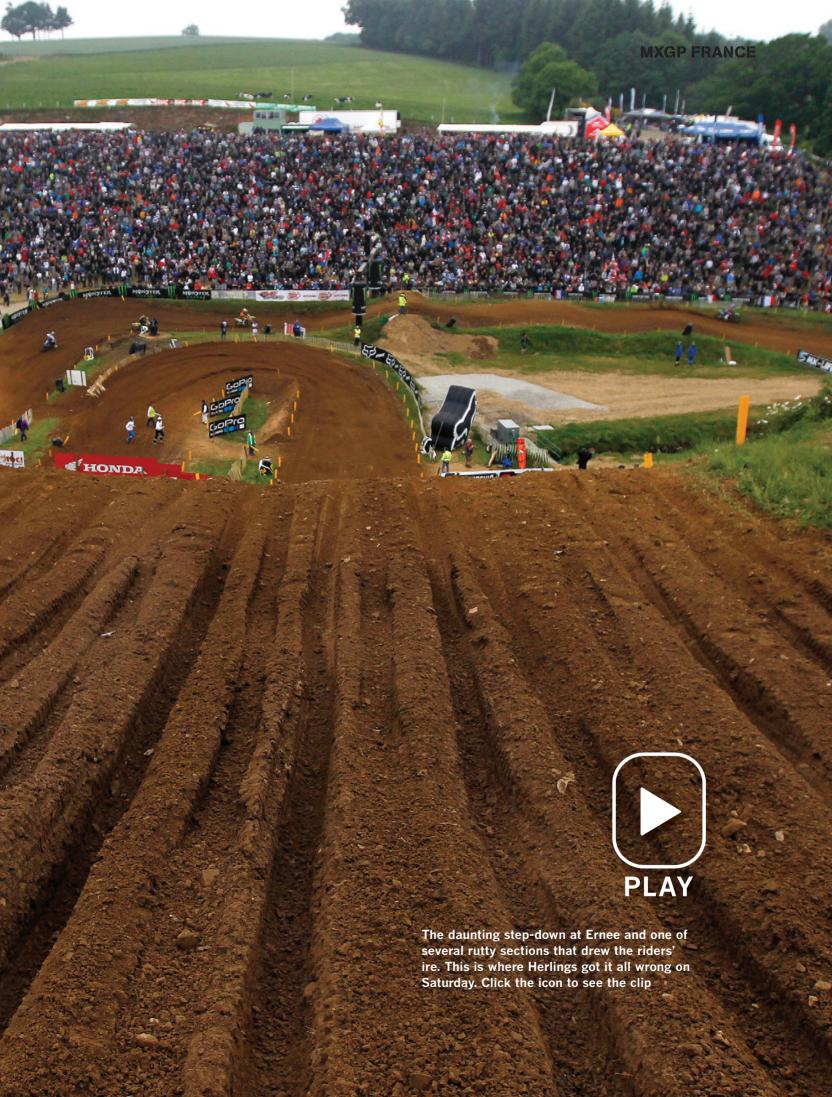


Grand Prix might have taken an extended break and stretched back into Europe but the raucous atmosphere witnessed in Brazil continued with a boisterous bumper crowd at Ernee for round eight of seventeen. The French, British and Brazilians can normally be relied on for generating the volume, excitement and sense of carnival that feverish support for local riders creates at this level and Ernee was no exception. Let's face it, the French have had plenty to cheer about since the start of the century and their filter of young talent doesn't show many signs of slowing.

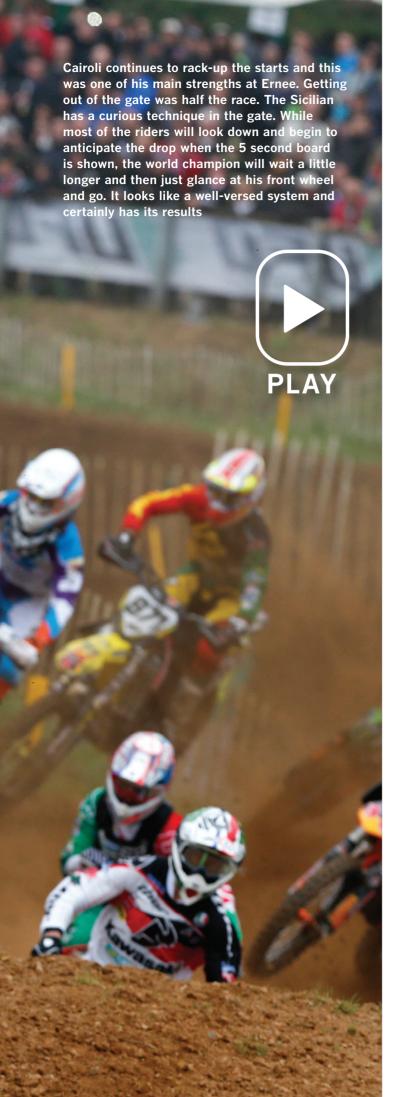
The results sheets will uphold that Ernee welcomed the fifth win of the season for Tony Cairoli and the eighth perfect run for KTM team-mate Jeffrey Herlings (thus the fifth time the duo have headed the classifications, almost a third of the entire calendar). It was heavily ironic though that one of the oldest and old-fashioned racing layouts on the schedule – that drew complaints by the dozen for the lack of traction, ridiculous over-watering and high element of risk with the rutty take-offs on Saturday – actually produced some of the best racing seen yet in 2013.

The first moto of MX1 was the highlight, for neutrals as much as it was for fans of Gautier Paulin, Tommy Searle and Jeremy Van Horebeek. All three Kawasaki riders enjoyed their own private duels. Searle's might have only been for seventh place with Honda's Max Nagl but the close proximity of the duo, the position-swapping and unpredictability of the spat was riveting viewing all the way through the second half of the distance. Another MX1 rookie, Van Horebeek, was taunted by Ken De Dycker with the most theatrical of block-passes but gained revenge for fourth place in the closing laps. And then there was Paulin. The undoubted star of the show and much more a viable contender for Cairoli's crown and currently sharper and more potent than Suzuki's Clement Desalle (a lonely third overall). The tall Frenchman conjured the biggest cheer I've heard at a Grand Prix when he managed the rare feat of catching and passing Cairoli to win Moto1 (the gauntlet has been thrown







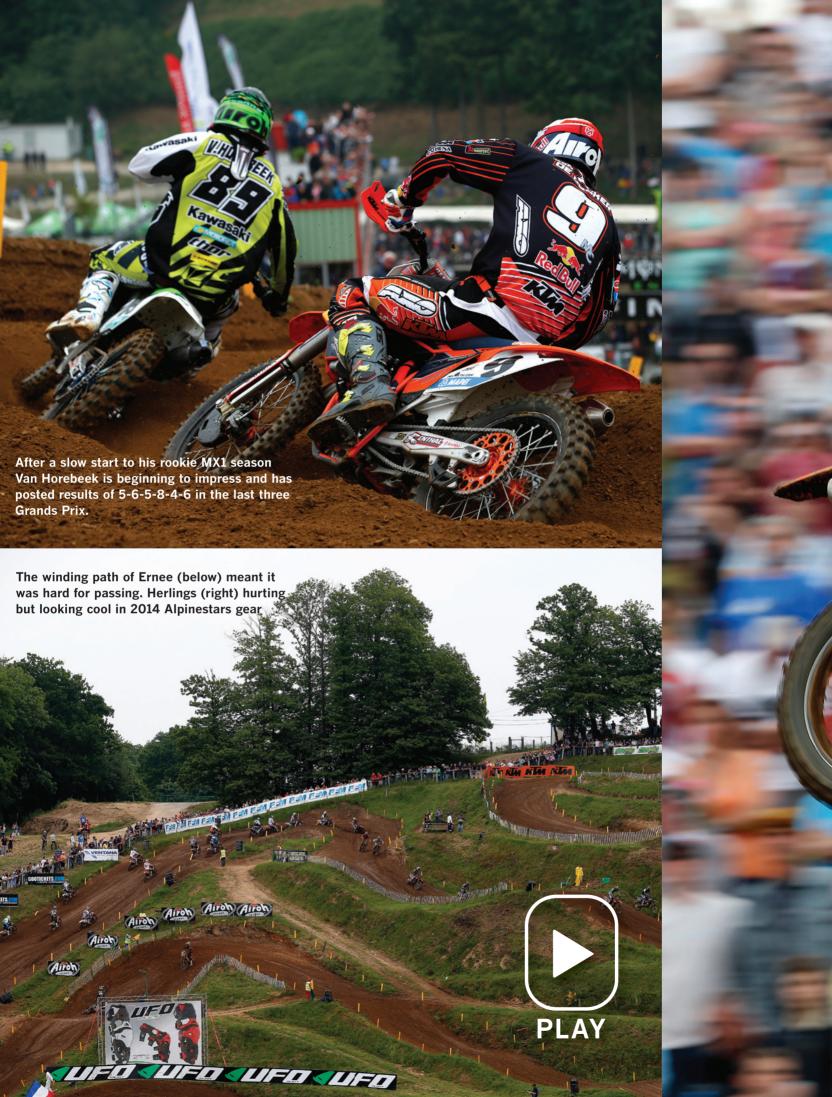


to the Brits for their support of Searle at Matterley Basin). A crashing Nagl in the first corner of the second moto held-up Paulin and prevented a re-run for the chequered flag. Cairoli was free as the track was sketchy but not as disastrous as riders were making-out. Some commented that the surface was more manageable in the cooler and cloudier conditions on Sunday.

Cairoli had remarked to OTOR on Saturday evening that the layout was so tight that it was almost necessary to hit someone to overtake. He must have felt like making contact with backmarker Matiss Karro after being baulked in his chase of Paulin in the first moto and waved angrily at the Estonian.

A rider busted and bruised was Herlings (click on the icon to see his graphic Saturday crash while leading the MX2 qualification heat). A painful ass, leg and ankle, not to mention a colour around his eye that made him look like a character from the TV series 'True Blood' meant the world champion was struggling. A weakened state allowed Dylan Ferrandis to keep the KTM rider in close range and warmed the crowd's vocal chords for the MX1 treat that was to come. Ferrandis' starts were key to his second career podium result and Christophe Charlier also toasted the same achievement after a powerful and bustling ride in the second moto. But at the front Herlings was undeniable. "I think my box of luck is pretty much empty now," the Dutchman said now leading team-mate Jordi Tixier - who crashed out of the lead briefly in the second moto while dicing with the rapid Jake Nicholls by 90 points in the standings (almost two rounds with nine remaining). "I'll have to stay calm for a while. What happened in Valkenswaard was unlucky and here also. I was just thrown in the air and was almost counting "2...1...bump" until I went down. It wasn't nice but I proved I am the strongest and the fastest and now I just have to stay out of trouble."

Cairoli has a similar margin in MX1; 56 over Paulin as he faces a busy week in the run-up to Maggiora and what is bound to be the third memorable Grand Prix on the bounce thanks to those heavy elements of nostalgia and expectation.











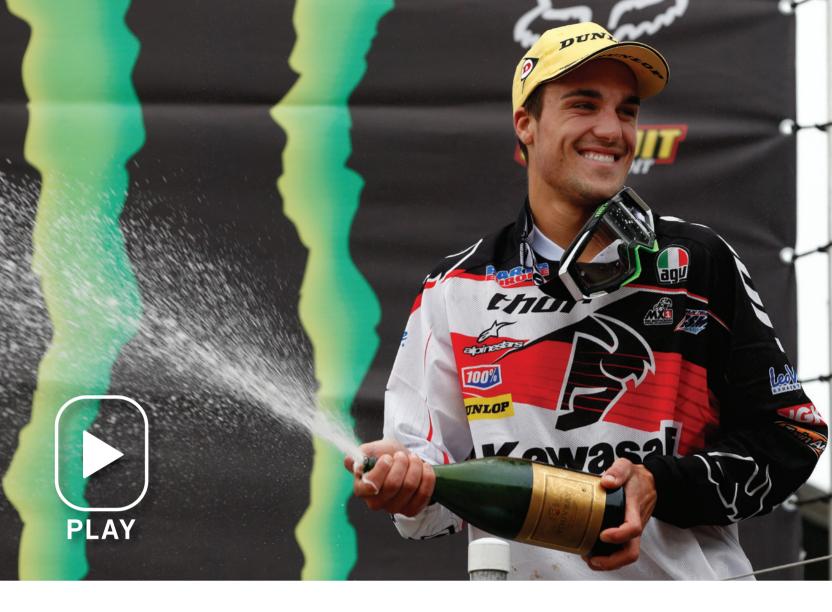












CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

| MX1 OVERALL RESULT | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------|--|--|
| Riders | | | | |
| 1 | Tony Cairoli, ITA | KTM | | |
| 2 | Gautier Paulin, FRA | Kawasaki | | |
| 3 | Clement Desalle, BEL | Suzuki | | |
| 4 | Tommy Searle, GBR | Kawasaki | | |
| 5 | Jeremy Van Horebeek, BEL | Kawasaki | | |

| 5 | Jeremy Van Horebeek, BEL | Kawasaki | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--|--|
| | | | | |
| MX1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP | | | | |
| S | TANDINGS (AFTER 8 | OF 17 ROUNDS) | | |

| Riders | | Points |
|--------|-----------------|--------|
| 1 | Tony Cairoli | 377 |
| 2 | Gautier Paulin | 321 |
| 3 | Clement Desalle | 309 |
| 4 | Ken De Dycker | 277 |
| 5 | Kevin Strijbos | 243 |

| MX2 OVERALL RESULT | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------|--|--|
| Riders | | | | |
| 1 | Jeffrey Herlings, NED | KTM | | |
| 2 | Dylan Ferrandis, FRA | Kawasaki | | |
| 3 | Christophe Charlier, FRA | Yamaha | | |
| 4 | Alex Tonkov, RUS | Honda | | |
| 5 | Jake Nicholls, GBR | KTM | | |

MX2 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 8 OF 17 ROUNDS)

| Riders | | Points |
|--------|---------------------|--------|
| 1 | Jeffrey Herlings | 397 |
| 2 | Jordi Tixier | 287 |
| 3 | Jose Butron | 247 |
| 4 | Glen Coldenhoff | 237 |
| 5 | Christophe Charlier | 230 |













took part in Steve Matthes PulpMX podcast for seminal motocross website www.racerxonline. com last week and he deservedly lambasted the recent lack of entries in the premier MX1 class (Bulgaria), and I struggled to find some sort of justification.

As a barometer of the health of the FIM Motocross World Championship it initially does not make for comfortable viewing. There was a time when the hint of a Grand Prix point would make the young or aspiring racer give his absolute 'all' and would cap a memorable weekend for those attempting to show their mettle. To score was seen as an achievement.

Understandably I have seen many comments of people concerned/angry/disappointed with the state of play. In some people's eyes a full fortyrider gate is what motocross is all about. For others they couldn't really care, and point to the drawbacks that include a division between speed and skill and subsequent safety matters. For Youthstream and their attempts to present the sport in more of an entertainment framework the battle for 26th position is neither here-nor-there (honestly, would sponsors, brands or even you at the track notice either?).

I tried to explain to Steve that the sight of twenty riders on the line is simply an indication of how the series is evolving. Those that have followed motocross for decades will have to grudgingly go along with it, if they still want to.

The powers-that-be would rather have 20 of the best riders on the Grand Prix scene in MX1 (that can handle the allegedly difficult 450cc four-strokes) than 40 which would include a percentage rolling up in a van and unlikely to be present the following week when the whole show transfers to Brazil or Australia. This then leads to another topic where Grand Prix has simply become an activity that is too expensive to be the open net that it once was. Riders contest the world championship now in the interests of career advancement, for using the exposure that

it might present and for a personal challenge of facing the best. It is not a source of self-generating income any more and hasn't been for nearly a decade. Getting paid (and well) is a big and important deal, but the motivations listed above are also a crucial part of why they risk so much and have ultimately chosen this route of being a professional athlete.

It feels like everything is getting tighter and more pressurised, with a decreasing amount of room for error in Grand Prix. Everyone is conscious of the money they are investing into racing and the need to deliver in terms of results, progress and publicity is arguably greater than it has been. To inhabit a factory saddle in 2013-2014 means a rider needs to be at his peak. The case of Steven Frossard – MX1 runner-up in 2011 and victim of three injuries since – proves how quickly a career can reverse from 'next big thing' to 'starting over again'.

We are already in a position where the factories are having a more crucial role in the extent they can support teams (as well as augment their own) and put bikes in the GP paddock, and that is why their views have to be carefully considered at the crux meeting in Geneva next week. Everyone knows the quick fix for adding numbers to Grand Prix, but that's not the philosophy of the championship at the moment where European feeder series' are being heavily incorporated into the FIM structure. Like MotoGP, a culture is being crafted of developing potential Grand Prix riders from 'within' (European junior championships and the worldwide MX Academy). How the sport will work for 2014 will soon be decided and - rightly or wrongly - expect a refined shape of the FIM Motocross World Championship to further take it in a direction for the future, with the chief goal of reaching more eyeballs and gaining more fans. There is a whole 'drive forward' rather than 'linger back' approach and - depending on your viewpoint - just don't look along the line.













Round four is in the books here in the AMA nationals; eight events to go and the riders and teams are enjoying the first of three breaks this weekend. The racing has been intense no doubt about it and the tracks have all been pretty good. Perhaps the biggest obstacle for the teams this season has been the live TV motos at two out of the four races this year, which reduces the time to recover and prepare the bike. More than anything that's been the main problem for everyone as the weather has yet to hit us that bad.

Whether there are live motos and little downtime or you hold the race stretched out over a week, there's no doubt that Monster Energy Kawasaki's Ryan Villopoto will win it for sure. Seven out of eight moto wins this year and a 16-point lead in the 450MX class speaks volumes. Red Bull KTM's Ryan Dungey, while not on the level of Villopoto, is better than every other rider in the class and his strategy at this point has to be to wait-out Villopoto and perhaps pressure him into a crash. It's all he really can do at this point and to be fair, Villopoto has had his moments out there on the track. It's a bleak plan of attack but for Dungey, it's the only one.

Honda Muscle Milk's Justin Barcia and Trey Canard have been very good with Barcia holeshotting a ton and leading laps but he just comes up a bit short at the end. Canard is hot and cold like most this year, when the starts come he can run the pace and when they don't, he can't. It's crazy to think about a 35-minute race coming down to the first five seconds but it's exactly that for racers not named Villopoto or Dungey. More than a few vets have expressed to me how deep the field is and how it's so hard to work your way up from a bad start. It's not uncommon for eight riders to be in the same second for many laps in a row like they were this past weekend. So unless you have the #1 or #2 on your bike, it's going to be a long summer.

In the 250MX class it's really boiling down to whether or not GEICO Honda's Eli Tomac can pull a start. When he can, he's won but when he can't, he has to fight through the pack. His team manager Mike Larocco (himself not a good starter in his almost 20-year pro career) lamented after the races that Eli puts himself in a spot on the gate where it's a boom-or-bust proposition and Mike would like Tomac to be a bit smarter to give himself a chance if he doesn't get out of the gate quick enough. Tomac's starts have left him withering a bit out there as the Euros have proven to be quick studies.

Yeah, that's right. The Euros! Red Bull KTM teammates Marvin Musquin and Kenny Roczen swapped firsts and seconds at High Point with Marvin taking the overall win from the points leader. Musquin now becomes the first multirace winner in the series and who would've thought that?

Musquin had one national victory here in America last summer (with a 2-2 score) and when he triumphed last weekend with a 2-2 score it was thought that this is the way the two-time World Champion would have to win: be consistent and hope for some carnage from the real 'fast' guys. But this past weekend at High Point, Marvin was right there. He held off Roczen's charge in the second moto and showed that perhaps he really, really can win this title. It was a very impressive day for the friendly Frenchman in both motos as he also fended off a hard-charging Tomac. Musquin has suddenly vaulted himself right into this title hunt.

GEICO Honda's Zach Osborne has been inconsistent. He's made some mistakes that have held him back from being a regular contender. Through four motos his first outings have been 9-6-6-10 while his second motos have been 5-2-5-3. Clearly Osborne needs to figure out those first moto problems before he gets swallowed up by the leaders. Zach is pretty happy in that when he raced the GP's he couldn't really battle with Roczen and Musquin but over here he's raced and beaten both riders. It's the small things right?







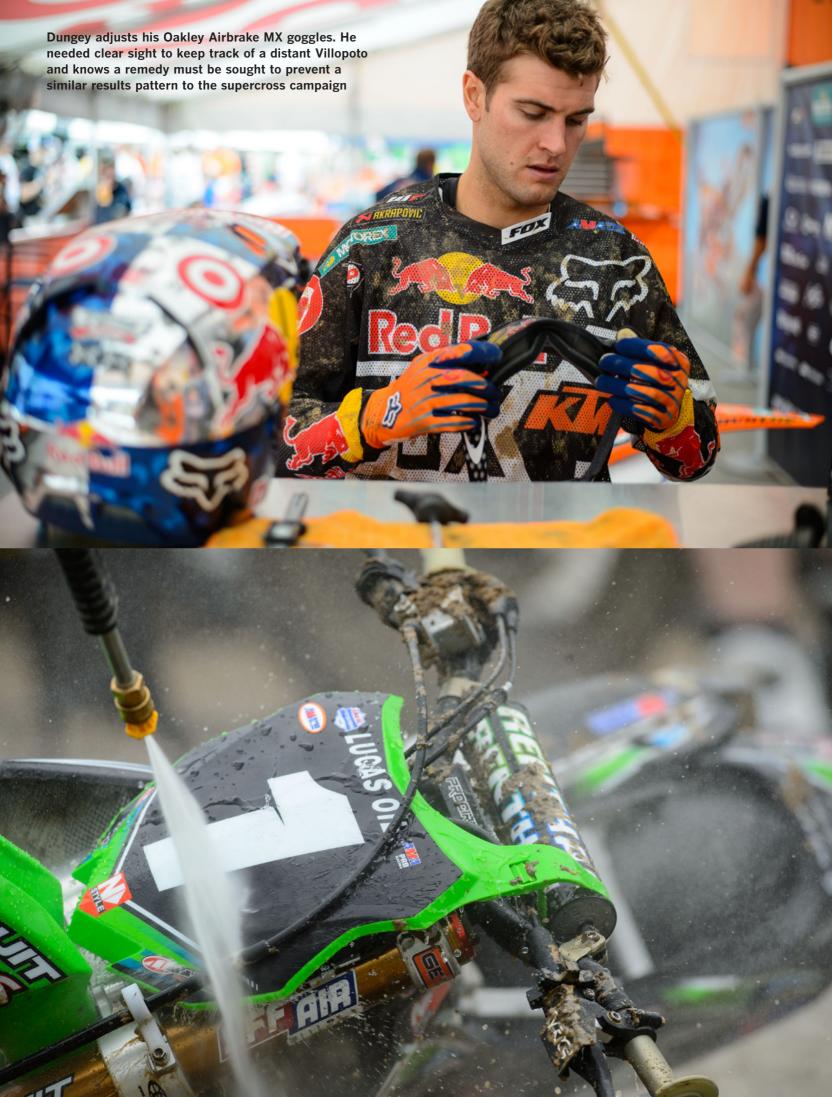


Defending champion Blake Baggett started off very good at Hangtown and it was thought that he'd just get better as the series went on but the opposite has happened. Bagget's been OK but he hasn't been able to put on his standard late-race charges that we saw last year. After four races he's almost a full race behind Roczen in the points.

And yes, Roczen, the German hasn't convinced watchers that he's fully over his late race fades from the 2012 summer as we haven't seen any typical hot weather yet but there's no doubt he's much better than he was last year. Five moto wins out of eight and a nice lead of 15 points over Tomac already has the kid well positioned. Roczen's trying to become the first rider since KTM's Grant Langston in 2003 to win a World title and an AMA national title joining Greg Albertyn (1999 450MX) and the immortal JMB (1991 250MX and 500MX) in that ring of honor.

The series over here is far from over with sixteen motos left in each class but there has been some tiers set for each category that seem impenetrable. There's five riders in each class that appear to have the right stuff to win races and as far as titles, with a combined 12 moto wins in the sixteen that have been run in both classes, Roczen and Villopoto are better than even money to be standing at the top at summers end.







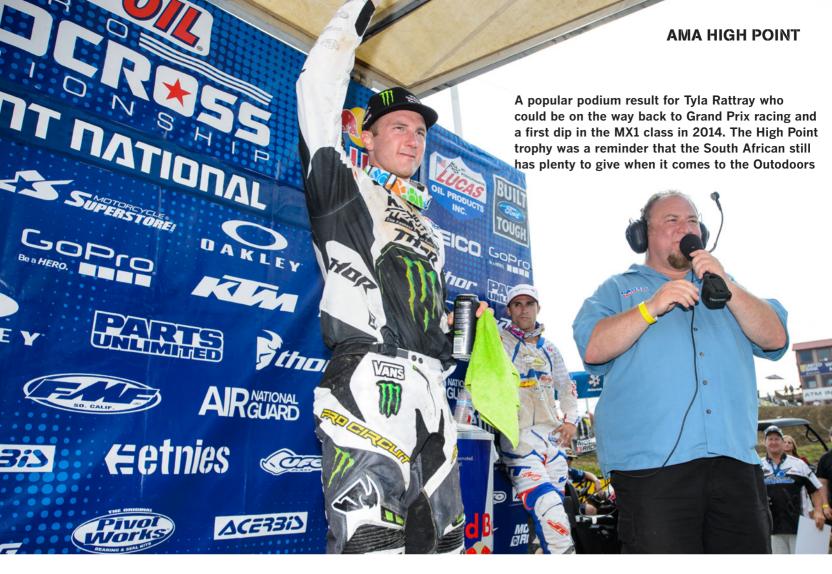












AMA MX PRO MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP

| 450MX RESULT | | | | |
|--------------|---------------------|----------|--|--|
| Riders | | | | |
| 1 | Ryan Villopoto, USA | Kawasaki | | |
| 2 | Ryan Dungey, USA | KTM | | |
| 3 | Tyla Rattray, RSA | Kawasaki | | |
| 4 | Justin Barcia, USA | Honda | | |
| 5 | Mike Alessi, USA | Suzuki | | |

| 450MX STANDINGS (AFTER 4 OF 12 ROUNDS) | | | | |
|--|----------------|--------|--|--|
| Ri | ders | Points | | |
| 1 | Ryan Villopoto | 193 | | |
| 2 | Ryan Dungey | 177 | | |
| 3 | Justin Barcia | 148 | | |
| 4 | Trey Canard | 120 | | |
| 5 | Mike Alessi | 116 | | |

| 250MX RESULT | | | | |
|--------------|---------------------|----------|--|--|
| Riders | | | | |
| 1 | Marvin Musquin, FRA | KTM | | |
| 2 | Ken Roczen, GER | KTM | | |
| 3 | Eli Tomac, USA | Honda | | |
| 4 | Zach Osborne, USA | Honda | | |
| 5 | Blake Baggett, USA | Kawasaki | | |

| (AFTER 4 OF 12 ROUNDS) | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------|--------|--|--|
| Ri | iders | Points | | |
| 1 | Ken Roczen | 185 | | |
| 2 | Eli Tomac | 170 | | |
| 3 | Marvin Musquin | 163 | | |
| 4 | Blake Baggett | 141 | | |
| 5 | Zach Osborne | 127 | | |
| | • | | | |

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BLOG

GENESIS OF A CHAMP...

Bv Steve Matthes

Eight motos down in the 450MX AMA nationals and seven moto wins for Monster Kawasaki's Ryan Villopoto. It's been an amazing run to start the outdoor season as the 2013 supercross champion looks to establish his dominance outside as well. And as good as he was in supercross with ten wins, he just might be better when the sun is out.

We've really been robbed of seeing Villopoto race 450MX as injuries have conspired to keep him out of three out of the five chances he's had to compete in the series. The one year that the three-time 250MX champion did enter the entire 450MX series he won it in a close battle with then-Suzuki's Ryan Dungey. What's funny is that when Villopoto first hit the scene it was actually thought that he was better outdoors than in. He only captured one 250SX title out of three chances while he never lost a title outdoors. And then of course there was the demolishing of everyone at the MXDN at Budds Creek on a 250. Yes sir. it was once thought that Villopoto didn't have the ideal style and patience to be that great indoors. I swear!

Well, here we are with three straight 450SX titles and now it seems that Villopoto is on a mission to back up his championship streak (every time he has finished a campaign) to four years. You have to go back to the 2009 450 supercross season - his first - as the one full term where he was defeated. The 2013 outdoor series has been a Villopoto Show start to finish. He passed his rival Ryan Dungey this past weekend at High Point and went on to win the second moto in a soul-crushing (for Dungey) ride. The only moto that Villopoto has lost is one in which he crashed twice... and he still got fourth on that occasion.

It's been a few years but there is a rider that I remember doing exactly what Villopoto is doing right now. To me, he is a carbon copy of Ricky Carmichael in that he rides a bit reckless, keeps the throttle pinned and when he gets into the front it's then that he really puts the hammer down. There's no following for Villopoto; he simply cannot stand to be behind someone. He presses on until he finds a way by. His pass on Dungey in the second moto this past weekend was a thing of beauty. I was in the mechanic's area for most of RC's wins in both classes and I'm blown away by what Villopoto is doing right now.

"RV is on another level from the last time he raced in 450MX, no doubt about it..."

In talking to Ryan he credits the bike for the difference. The 2011 Kawasaki was fine but once he and team-mate Jake Weimer got the 2012 frame on the bike, things really started clicking for both of them. For whatever reason the 2011 just wouldn't stay calm and corner the way the riders liked. The '12 frame, with its aluminum composite made so that it was stiffer and softer in the right places was the key to unlocking the wins. And in 2013, with the addition of Showa air forks and Showa shock, things really seem to be firing. Whether it's bike or body or something, there's no doubt that Villopoto is the best rider in America right now and truthfully, probably the world. He's shaken off the comparisons to James Stewart, Dungey and Chad Reed and emerged as the 'numero uno'. No question about it. The only person that can stop him at the moment is himself and I don't see that happening anytime soon.

















It's rare for a racer to come out of the amateurs with a list of accomplishments as long as those totaled-up by Adam Cianciarulo. It can set really high expectations, but competition at the top is a whole different animal – longer motos, quicker rivals, and more faster guys than athletes ever have to think about at the amateur level.

Unfortunately for Cianciarulo, he came down with a really bad case of salmonella poisoning just prior to his scheduled AMA Pro debut at Hangtown, and he has yet to hit the racetrack in anger.

"He lost about eight pounds because of that," Monster Energy/Pro Circuit Kawasaki's Mitch Payton said. "He's gained about half of that back now and we're hoping he can put the rest of the weight back on and put in some real motos before Budds Creek."

As of now, Budds Creek – round five of the Lucas Oil/AMA Pro Motocross Championships – is Cianciarulo's scheduled debut event, if everything else goes according to plan. There's no reason to rush it at this point, as he's not in any kind of championship chase, and if not for the fact that he hasn't qualified to race Loretta Lyns, it's possible that everyone would've

agreed to have him just hold off until after that fixture to make his pro debut...which would have given him a chance to break the tiebreaker shares atop the Amateur National MX Championship record books.

So, what should we expect from the new wunderkind, considering his competition will have been putting in hard motos in race conditions for over a month by the time he will get out there?

"I mean, I think he should be top 10..." says Cianciarulo's trainer Aldon Baker (who also oversees Ryan Villopoto, Tyla Rattray Jake Weimer and Blake Baggett). "That's where I would see him. Obviously, he needs to get experience. He's got to know how the pace is in the beginning, off the start, and all of those things. I think if he just handles that then he'll just get in that top 10. And that would be great. I mean, to learn from there, I think would be good because it's even tougher starting halfway through the series. That's why I was keen for him to start from Hangtown but unfortunately that couldn't happen. You know, each week he gets better. That illness really ruined him. We'll see, but if he can just get into top 10 that would be really good to build on."





Cianciarulo's teammate and training partner Tyla Rattray figures maybe a little bit better than top 10, if things go well. "It's always hard coming into a season halfway in," veteran Rattray says. "It's never easy. Those guys know he's good, they know he's a good starter but he's never raced them. So, I think for him, if he can get into the top five, I think that will be good. You can't expect the guy to go out there and win. I mean, it's going to be his first pro race!"

Payton figures it about the same way that Baker does, though. "I'd be happy if he had good speed and I would say, to be fair to him, I would say he should be in the top 10," Payton says. "And anything higher than that is good. But for his first race, it would have been better if he would have started at Hangtown, where everybody was fresh, but now everybody will have 4 races under them and everybody's got their feet. Everybody has a pecking order now, where they think they belong, and they all fight to keep where they're at, so I'd say top 10 is realistic and fair."

And Cianciarulo's most famous training partner, who came into his first full year of AMA Nationals in 2006 and ended up winning the title – and the next two that followed – Ryan Villopoto, had this to say: "Once he gets his feet wet and gets in there, my predictions coming in were – maybe after he has raced a couple of rounds – that I think he has the potential to be up there inside the top five, for sure, and racing with the guys up front. It's going to be obviously about learning for him. He's got to learn a lot. But the speed and potential is all there."

So, who do you believe? The bosses or the fellow racers?

It sounds like we're going to find out for sure at Budds Creek on June 22nd...





TREY CANARD ON TRYING TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE AWAY FROM A THROTTLE

Words and Photos by Steve Cox

Team Honda Muscle Milk's Trey Canard is becoming a force in the motocross world. The thing is, it has almost nothing to do with his riding ability or racing results. Like Kevin Windham before him (and for different reasons), Canard is becoming a fan favorite because of who he is off the track. Recently, in his home state of Oklahoma, there have been a string of tornadoes that cost a lot of lives and caused billions of dollars in property damage, and Canard is working with Honda and the Red Cross to raise money for those people affected by the storms. It's this sort of voluntary behavior that has endeared Canard to his fans.



Isn't it kind of weird to come from being just a fat little redheaded kid who liked racing his 85cc motorcycles and now realize that you're looked up to in the way that you are by most of the entire sport of motocross?

It's pretty weird, you know, because I still see myself as that fat, little redheaded kid that was racing an 80. [His mom Kari butts in to say that Canard "wasn't that fat".] I was pretty fat. It's weird to me when people come up to me and say really nice things, like that I'm an inspiration...

And it's not just about riding your dirt bike...

Yeah, mostly it's not. It's people who are really encouraged by my faith and the way that I try and present that. It's kind of surreal, you know, because I don't see myself as that type of figure, but I think in a way I've got to embrace it because I think that it's a great opportunity to impact this world in a good way.



There's pressure that comes with that, though, isn't there?

Yeah, but it's enjoyable for me. There's more good that comes from it. With the tornadoes and stuff, I feel that I have such a small, small hand in trying to do something. But I think that everyone has a hand in it, so I think the important thing is just to try and do your part and do your best with it. And it's great to see our state just come together. I mean, it's so encouraging. I know that there have been lives lost and things like that, but the tragedy has really brought people close together and really learn about what's important. A lot of people

ask why I live there and things like that, and... ... I don't know, but I think that it's bigger than the tornadoes. It's bigger than...

It's the community, is what you're saying...

Yes. It's the community that's amazing. I've seen it a lot with the [Oklahoma City] Thunder [NBA basketball team]. The whole state just embraces them and I feel like, if you're an Oklahoman, the community just embraces you with everything. And it's cool for me, too, because I feel that, too, as an Oklahoman. That respect has been amazing.

FEATURE

And when you're at the races, you have to know what your job is, right? Your job is to race, and to win. But at the same time, with your history, it seems like you've had some pretty unique opportunities to be reminded what's really important and what's not. And in the grand scheme of things, racing isn't. So, when tragedies happen that are close to you, does it sometimes make the racing part of your job more difficult? Or is it motivating? It's difficult when you see stuff on the news and you're here at the races. I was watching the news last night [the night before the Tennessee MX National, when multiple tornadoes touched down in Oklahoma yet again], and I was really worried about my family and my friends and everything like that. But it's cool to be a part of that community and try to stand for them and give them something to be happy about. I know that not many people really like motocross out in Oklahoma, but I know there are a few who, if I do good on a weekend, it gives them that little bit of extra joy to pull them through a tough time. So, that's cool. I mean, I think it's a great opportunity and a huge blessing for me to have that support and that influence if it's there, and I just do the best I can with it.









A SWIFT LOOK BACK AT SOME OF THE SPEED AND THRILLS OF THE IOM TT

Photos by www.suzuki-racing.com, Taku Nagami, David Traynor and Monster Energy







The Isle of Man TT – a spectacle with 106 years of history – has become this surreal week of extremity. Where motorcycle racers not necessarily talked about for the rest of the year suddenly become symbols of guts and glory and ultimate purveyors of adrenaline-chasers that live for the moment.

After a tremendous film and illuminating literary take on the TT in the last three years the Island is once more becoming an epicentre for motorcycling for one week of the fifty-two. Characters, coverage and new technology of capturing the racing (not to mention all those camera phones and social media channels spreading the noise and thrill of 131mph laps) have helped the TT reach fresh audiences. As the attention gathers momentum there are a few elements that do not change and the challenge of the near-37 mile (60km) course is barely different compared to over a century past. The winners also remain constant.

Michael Dunlop might be the embodiment of 'devil-may-care' but the name and legacy is so powerfully connected to the TT. The Irishman claimed four chequered flags with Superbike, Superstock and two Supersport events but was denied the chance to equal lan Hutchinson's 2010 record (one of the highlights of 'Closer to the Edge') by 41 year old John McGuinness who consolidated his position as the Island's second most decorated competitor with his twentieth success in the prestigious Senior. The Englishman is still six trophies behind the late Joey Dunlop.























WHEN WARC...

Photos by Alpinestars/Honda Pro Images







free weekend in the MotoGP calendar allowed the chance for Alpinestars to bring together two of the sport's most immediate names for a curious meeting. The Maxxess Megastore in Bordeaux, France was the setting for a large fan attendance and much fuss as Freddie Spencer – 500cc world champion in 1983 and 1985 (also winning the 250cc crown that year) – was in Europe to make acquaint-ance with the man who had removed his 31 year old record of being the youngest premier class Grand Prix winner, Marc Marquez. "Hopefully, Marc may hold the record as long as I did," said Spencer, who like Marquez

forged his achievement as a twenty year old on a Honda (this time the NS500) at Spa Frncorchamps, Belgium in 1982. "For Marc to come along now and to perform like he has is great. Great to see, great for the sport!" Marquez knocked Spencer's distinction down a place in the history books with his success at Austin, Texas in April. "I saw many videos and from what people explained to me, Freddie was always more or less like me, always pushing, never was enough," he said. "When you see he competed in two World Championships on a Sunday...now this I cannot imagine."



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Max Biaggi? Max... Biaggi? Like most MotoGP fans, that was the question I found myself asking last week when Ducati invited the Roman Emperor to dust off his leathers and turn some laps on Ben Spies' Desmosedici in a rain-hit two-day test at Mugello last week.

After interviewing new Ducati Corse General Manager Bernhard Gobmeier at length at the Italian Grand Prix a few days earlier I felt pretty convinced that the Italian factory had finally implemented a considered, long-term approach to solving the genetic problems of the most mystifying bike on the grid.

Gobmeier told me that he was introducing a more holistic approach to Ducati Corse, focusing on the strengths of the individuals and relieving them of the pressure that they have felt under the presence and demands of Valentino Rossi over the past two seasons.

He also assured us that Ducati are working towards building a completely new bike that they hope will challenge for wins in 2014 and make them championship contenders once again in 2015. The new lab bike, which was ridden impressively by test rider Michele Pirro to seventh place in the Mugello race, is merely experimental, with more scope for adjustments than the current race version and therefore capable of providing a wider range of data. Essentially, they have finally accepted that their current design is doomed to failure and a radical redesign is required.

Which brings me back to my original question: Max Biaggi? According to the Pramac Racing Team press release the Italian 'mainly tried to reacquaint himself with the power and the differences in the latest generation of MotoGP

bikes, with carbon brakes, tyres and the latest electronic package innovations, without searching for quick lap times.'

So in other words they put a retired rider, who has not ridden a race bike for eight months and not touched a MotoGP bike for nine years, on a machine they know essentially does not work and on tyres he has never tried before. The fact it rained on both days of the test merely compounded the futility of this exercise.

"I found it hard to imagine how Ducati would have sanctioned the Biaggi test..."

After listening to Gobmeier speak so eloquently and logically about Ducati's issues, I find it hard to imagine that he would have sanctioned this test. However, according to Francesco Batta – owner of Team Ducati Alstare in WSBK – he did: "I nearly fell out with Gobmeier," he told Italia 1 at Portimao at the weekend. "I don't understand what this week's test was useful for. I sometimes find it hard to understand Ducati's strategies." Batta added that he had been working on a marketing project for Ducati involving Biaggi and was hoping to have him test the Panigale in the near future.

With Andrea Iannone also having tested the lab bike at Mugello, alongside regular test riders Pirro and Franco Battaini – the factory's third private test in as many months – it is clear that Ducati are working hard. But with seemingly scattergun decisions like the Biaggi test, the worry for the faithful Ducatisti is whether there is a strategy at all.

















'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focussed on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at **www.ontrackoffroad.com** every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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